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THE LAST MARYLAND FLIGHT OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON

Edward R. Grant

Although I may not be the only man alive who has seen Passenger Pigeons (*Estopistes migratorius*) in Maryland, I expect I am the only person who can give an eye-witness account of the last big flight and the disaster which befell it.

I was born and reared at Franklin Hill, a few miles north of Westernport at the base of the Allegheny Plateau in Allegany County, Maryland. My earliest memories of the Passenger Pigeon, or Wild Pigeon, as we always called it, date back to the early 1870's. At that time this species was a regular spring and fall migrant in Allegany County. It normally arrived from the South in about the middle of April. The return flight took place during Indian Summer; I suppose this would make it about the first half of October. I always saw fewer in the fall than in spring, because they left in scattered bunches and returned in a, so to say, concentrated body. I cannot recall having heard anyone say during my childhood days or since, that the Wild Pigeon had a fixed intuition to return from the South on a certain feast day, as the Capistrano swallows are reputed to do.

To my knowledge the Wild Pigeon did not rear its young in Allegany County in the '70's. In those parts of Garrett County with which I was familiar--the areas around Deer Park, Mountain Lake Park, Oakland and Grantsville--the Wild Pigeon nested each summer. But they were not found around the towns themselves, only back in the nearby woods. I believe these birds were attracted to Garrett County by the abundance of farmland, which supplied the grain which formed such an important part of their diet. Acorns, which they also relished, were found in abundance in surrounding woodland. Some Wild Pigeons nested in adjacent Mineral County, West Virginia, but evidently the limited acreage of farm land in Allegany County made this part of Maryland unattractive to the Wild Pigeon during the breeding season.

The Pigeons were usually lean when they first arrived in the springtime, but they quickly put on weight. When they were well fed up,

my father, Patrick Grant, would go out and shoot about a dozen. I well remember his returning from a successful hunt in the Franklin area, laying his dozen plump birds on the kitchen table, and saying to my mother: "Rosey, pick out what you want and give the remainder to the neighbors." My two brothers and I always looked forward to a pigeon meal; they were the finest kind of eating.

At times, Father would bring home a Wild Turkey, which he always obtained by an ingenious method of imitating the mating call of the female, and thus attracting the male to where he was hiding. His turkey caller consisted of a pointed iron rod made from a file, and imbedded

in a half coconut shell which was held in the palm of the right hand. The turkey imitation was made by striking the pointed tip of the file against a piece of soapstone in the left hand.

Father last went hunting in November 1873. Shortly after that we moved a few miles north to Phoenix Foot, which is three miles southwest of Barton, Allegany County. Mother became quite ill in the early winter of 1875-76, and it became necessary for her to live with relatives in Barton in order to be near a doctor.

On New Years Day in 1876, I walked from Phoenix Foot up to Barton to visit Mother. We had had fine weather all through December, and the first day of the new year was warm and sunny--so warm that I was dressed in summer clothes. At about 1:30 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when I was about half way between Phoenix Foot and Morrison's Mill, a strange shadow suddenly engulfed me. Looking up,



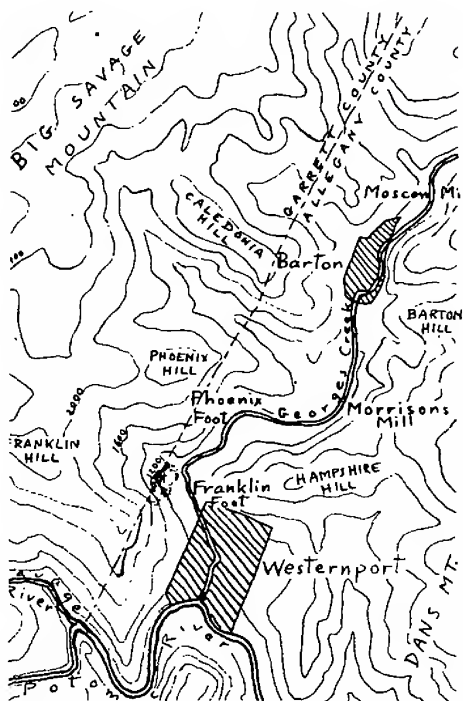
Mr. Edward R. Grant

I was astonished to see a tremendous flock of Wild Pigeons flying toward the west. Had this event taken place in April instead of January, I would still have been greatly impressed due to the large size of the flock. It was definitely the largest I ever saw. But what were these birds doing in Maryland in the dead of winter. As I watched the flock in amazement, the birds continued to come, in a dense band which as I recall was about 75 to 100 feet wide. The flock stretched continuously for something between one-eighth and one-quarter of a mile, and contained thousands and thousands of birds. They flew rapidly westward and soon disappeared over Phoenix Hill in Garrett County. During the remaining two miles to Barton I watched for additional flocks of Wild Pigeons, but no others appeared.

The weather remained mild until late February. Then severe cold and snowy weather came. I feared that any Wild Pigeons that were in Garrett County at that time must have perished, although I did not read in the paper that any dead ones had actually been found. In the fall of 1876 I watched in vain for an autumnal flight; and likewise, during the succeeding springs I was disappointed in not seeing any more Wild Pigeons.

I have read (Coues and Prentiss, *Avifauna Columbiana*, Bull. U.S. Nat. Mus. 26: 90-91, 1883) that the last large flock seen in the vicinity of Washington, D.C., was in about 1858 or 1859. The only Maryland records I can find since the flight I observed were small flocks near Jefferson and Laurel, both in the fall of 1889.

It is a terrible shame that such a fine bird should have disappeared, never to return. Let us all strive together for better protection of endangered species so that no other shall follow the fateful path of the Wild Pigeon.



Locality in southwestern Allegany County where Mr. Grant observed the flight of Passenger Pigeons in 1876

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS SIP MAPLE SAP

It happened at Chalk Point, Anne Arundel County, Maryland. On a crisp, windy, and sunny day in March 1951, while sawing some stove wood, moving shadows attracted my attention. Looking up, I saw two Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus satrapa*) flitting about the branches of a red maple tree. Soon they landed on the trunk, within six feet of me, and began to sip maple sap from some holes left by woodpeckers, all the time uttering their high notes of "zee" or "tsee". They were very friendly, and stayed quite a while examining the various woodpecker holes in the tree trunk. Be on your guard, and next year when the maple sap starts to run from woodpecker holes, watch to see whether other species share this interesting feeding habit.

E. John Besson

REPORT ON BIRD DAY - 1950

Compiled by Haven Kolb

May 6, 1950 - Bird Day - will certainly linger long in the memories of the many observers who took part in this annual event. Never before have there been so many human participants and it is likely that it will be a long time before there will again be so many birds to greet them. Due to a combination of circumstances which held many northern birds late in our latitude while releasing upon us a pent-up flood of delayed migrants from the south, observer after observer was led to comment on the unprecedented variety and abundance of birds (see Robbins, *The Season, Maryland Birdlife*, 6: 47, 1950). In most parts of the State the day began rather unpromisingly with fog and mist, but the aural birder noted unusual stirrings behind the white curtain. When the air cleared about mid-morning and the binocular brigade could go to work, lists began to shape up rapidly. In some localities there was an afternoon interruption due to storms, but those who rode it out continued to add new species to their tally-cards late into the evening.

Thirty-three reports were received, representing 12 counties and Baltimore City. On these lists 193 species were tallied, not far from two-thirds of the total number which have been recorded from the State. Only two of these, the Marbled Godwit and Dickcissel, could be considered great rarities in their localities. On the other hand some not uncommon birds like the Blue Grosbeak were missed. Lack of coverage along the ocean beach and flats resulted in a poor showing of species preferring such habitats. No birds were seen in very great numbers, for the season of large migrating flocks of blackbirds and waterfowl was past, but some rather high counts of non-flocking species were made, for example, 105 Yellow-throats and 112 Parula Warblers at Patuxent, 69 Catbirds at Middle River, and 33 House Wrens at Rosedale. Some large counts of Blue Jays indicated that the migration, usual in early May, was taking place at the time of these counts. The Goldfinch was the most abundant bird counted, with a total of 1184 individuals on the 14 representative lists. The largest list was that of Robbins and Springer at the Patuxent Refuge with 123 species. The poor showing of the White-breasted Nuthatch is noteworthy. Only 3 of the 14 most representative lists recorded this species, and to a total of only 5 birds. This paucity was borne out by the other lists, which also showed very few records. Yet the Tufted Titmouse which shares the same habitat was recorded in good numbers indicating that the nuthatch was not missed because its habitat was neglected. In general, totals for individuals of many species, as derived from the summation of the 14 most representative reports, were quite impressive. Study of the lists themselves shows that the large totals were obtained by the accumulation of many small counts, indicating that the birds were well distributed and spread thickly.

Reports were submitted in such a variety of forms and with sup-

plementary information in such varying degrees of completeness that it was found difficult to compare lists. While space does not permit all lists to be published in full, we give below a resume of the salient facts regarding each. It can be seen that the most representative lists were obtained when at least 5 morning hours were devoted to the observations. Occasionally, however, short periods of observation revealed species found on no other list, so it is hoped that everyone will feel he has a part in this yearly bird-watching event and will contribute whatever he can to an all-over one-day effort. It is doubtful if 1951 will bring another such flood of birds as we have seen in 1950, but it could certainly swell the ranks of the birders. In 1950 there were no lists from Somerset, Worcester, Wicomico, Talbot, Queen Annes, Kent, Cecil, Calvert, St. Marys, Howard, or Garrett Counties. Let's have 23 counties next time. And please include in your report: (1) the time, (2) the place, (3) a count of the birds (not just a check beside a species name), (4) the names of the observers, and if possible, (5) a brief statement about weather conditions and the habitats observed.

In the table which closes this report the species-by-species counts of 14 lists have been brought together. These lists cover all observation periods of 5 hours or more. Other lists were based on either a shorter period, or were submitted without time specified, or were without counts of the birds. The fifteenth column of the table refers to lists (numbers as in the resume) which reported a few species in addition to those accounted for by the tabulated lists. The sixteenth column presents species totals for the 14 representative lists.

Some interesting points are discernible in this table. Fox example, 20 species are on every one of the 14 lists: Turkey Vulture, Killdeer, Flicker, Crested Flycatcher, Phoebe, Barn Swallow, Crow, Mockingbird, Robin, Bluebird, Starling, Oven-bird, Red-wing, Scarlet Tanager, Cardinal, Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. These are all familiar birds: either birds which are large and conspicuous on the landscape or birds which habitually reside in the vicinity of man. Perhaps the Crested Flycatcher and Scarlet Tanager do not always come to mind as doorway birds but they are common where large trees abound about houses. The most familiar species, then, were, not un-expectedly, the most frequent in observational lists. It is also noteworthy that all except one of these birds are breeding species and that none is transient merely. But not all of these widely distributed species exhibit consistently high counts; the Crested Flycatcher (54), Phoebe (56), and Mockingbird (56) averaged about 4 per list. This is what the ecologist calls high frequency with low density. In general, however, this table shows a high degree of correlation between frequency and density as the accompanying scatter-diagram (Fig. 1) shows graphically enough to make statistical calculation unnecessary for our illustrative purposes. (Totals come to only 184 in this diagram because 9 of the 193 species are

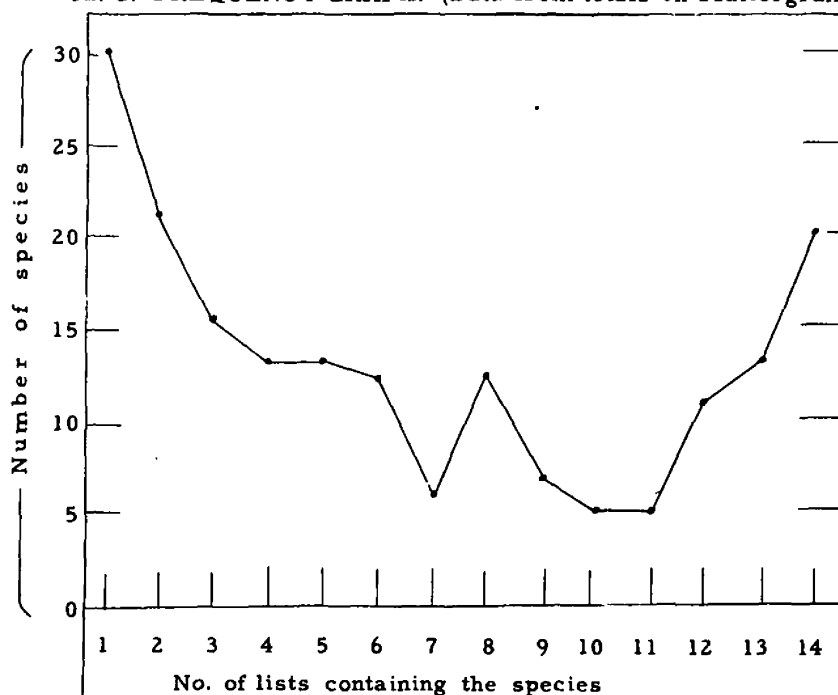
FIG. 1. SCATTERGRAM SHOWING NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS OF EACH SPECIES ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF TIMES THE SPECIES WAS RECORDED. (E.g., 26 species were recorded on only one of the 14 lists and totaled 1-4 individuals; eleven species were recorded on two of the lists to a total of 1-4 individuals; three species were recorded on three different lists but to a total of only 1-4 individuals, etc.)

No. of lists-		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Individuals	Over 1000														1
	601-1000												1	1	2
	401-600													3	1
	251-400											1	1	5	2
	151-250				1					1		2	2	1	6
	101-150							1		1	1	1	5		2
	65-100			1			1	2	3	1	1	1	1	3	3
	41- 64				1	1	3	1	3	3	1		2		3
	26- 40				2	5	1	1	4	1	1				
	16- 25	1	2	2	2	4	5	1	1						
	10- 15	1	1	5	2	1	1	1		1	1				
	5- 9	2	7	5	5	2	1								
	1- 4	26	11	3											
TOTALS		30	21	16	13	13	12	6	12	7	5	5	11	13	20

listed in column 15 without counts.) It is interesting to notice also that the number of species listed but once is largest (30) and that the frequency curve (Fig. 2) is reverse J-shaped as is the case in many plant frequency studies. Of course, these data are inadequate for substantial conclusions, but the comments may serve to stimulate some interest in the problems of bird numbers.

This report should not close without mentioning some good lists which could not strictly be considered in our Bird-Day review. Miss Pearl Heaps extended her count in Baltimore City to May 7, listing 42 species in the two days. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cole on May 7 saw 63

FIG. 2. FREQUENCY GRAPH. (Data from totals on scattergram)



species within 100 yards of their home in Towson. On Gibson Island, Judge and Mrs. William L. Henderson on May 5 listed 54 species including the Bonaparte's Gull. Mr. Orville Crowder on May 5 saw 82 species within his sanctuary at Chase including the Pintail and Redhead.

Resume of Bird Day Reports

1. Washington Co: Hagerstown, Dam No. 4, Taylor's Landing, South Mountain, Edgemont Reservoir, Indian Springs, Licking Creek, Woodmont, Pearre, and Allegany County line. 16 hours, (4:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.). Dr. and Mrs. R. S. Stauffer.

2. Frederick Co.: Buckeystown and vicinity. 8 hours (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Robert E. Stewart and M. Brooke Meanley.

3. Frederick and Carroll Co.: Woodsboro, Linganore, and Mt. Airy. 7 hours (7 a.m. to 2 p.m.). Paul E. Taylor.

4. Montgomery Co.: Pennyfield, Seneca, and Great Falls. 6 hours (9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.). Charles N. Mason, with additional counts for some species by Frank C. Cross.

5. Harford Co.: Rocks of Deer Creek, Broad Creek Scout Reservation, Conowingo. 7 hours (7:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.). Mr. and Mrs. Oliver I. Gaines, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon F. Vars, George Drumm, Mrs. John W. Beach, William McHoul, and Orville W. Crowder.

6. Baltimore Co.: Loch Raven. 13 hours (4:15 a.m. to 5:10 p.m.). Haven Kolb.

7. Baltimore Co.: Rosedale. 11 hours (6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and 4:15 to 6:30 p.m.). Duvall Jones.
8. Baltimore Co.: Whitemarsh. 6 hours (8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.). Douglas Hackman.
9. Baltimore Co.: Middle River. 13 hours (E.W. 7:15 to 11:55 a.m. and 12:55 to 5:30 p.m.; L.L.H. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., separately -- reports combined by compiler). Edwin Willis and Larry L. Haynie.
10. Montgomery Co.: Unity. 5 hours (dawn to dusk but intermittent). Seth H. Low.
11. Prince Georges and Anne Arundel Co.: Patuxent Research Refuge. 20 hours (C.S.R. 4:40 a.m. to 8:35 p.m. minus 3/4 hour; P.F.S. 5 hours separately). Chandler S. Robbins and Paul F. Springer.
12. Charles Co.: Port Tobacco, Allen's Fresh, Pope's Creek. 11 hours (6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). M. C. Crone, M. W. Goldman, A. R. Stickley.
13. Caroline Co.: Federalsburg. 5 hours (11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Mr. and Mrs. Martin L. Stapleton.
14. Dorchester Co.: Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. 6 hours (7 a.m. to 1 p.m.). W. Steele Webster.
15. Allegany Co.: Frostburg and vicinity. Hours not given. 44 species. 15 Baltimore Orioles was an outstanding feature. Esther Carter, Ella Darling, Myra Taylor and 25 Beall Elementary School children.
16. Allegany Co.: Cumberland, Hours not given. 20 species. Sara Wright, Adele Malcolm and 17 junior members of Allegany Club.
17. Frederick Co.: Linganore Creek and Woodsboro. Hours not given. 66 species. This was the only list to record the Screech Owl and Fox Sparrow. Frederick Branch (individual names not supplied).
18. Montgomery Co.: Kensington. 2 hours (7:15 to 9). J. V. Derby, Jr.
19. Baltimore City: 5 hrs. (7 a.m. to noon). 50 sp. A.A. Brandenburg.
20. Baltimore City: Leakin Park. Hours not given. 44 species. Included 5 Red-headed Woodpeckers. Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Buck, Jr.
21. Baltimore City: Gwynns Falls Park. 26 species. Allen Burk.
22. Baltimore Co.: Lake Roland. 12 to 3 p.m. 54 sp. Alice Kaestner.
23. Anne Arundel Co.: Hours not given. 34 species. J. H. Coggins.
24. Anne Arundel Co.: Gibson Island. Hours not given. 51 species. This list reported perhaps the most interesting find of a remarkable day, the Marbled Godwit; it also included the only Common Tern, and was one of two lists reporting the Canvas-back. Mrs. E. G. Tappan.
25. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 46 species. A.L. and H.G. Varrieur.
26. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 44 species. This was the only list reporting the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and one of two reporting the Canvas-back. E. S. Gary.
27. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 40 species. This is one of two lists to report the Brown Creeper. Eleanor E. North.
28. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 38 species. This was the only list reporting the Pigeon Hawk. Mrs. Robert McLean.
29. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 35 species. This was the only list reporting the Semipalmated Plover and one of two to report the Brown Creeper. Mrs. Wm. H. Henderson.
30. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 32 species. Mrs. Edward Palmer.
31. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 28 species. Mrs. Chauncy Brooks.
32. A.A.Co.: Gibson Island. 21 species. George Englar.

Mar. - Dec., 1951

MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

35

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Oth-	Total
	WCo	Bkyl	MtA	Sen	Harf	Lrv	Radl	WTM	MRv	Unty	Patz	PTb	Fed	Bwtr	er	
Common Loon	1				12	2						2		1		18
Horned Grebe																2
Pied-bill.Grebe	2				1				1		1	3				9
Gt. Blue Heron	1								2							18
American Egret							1					8	1	5	1	2
Green Heron	1			1	2	1	3		3		1	1	1	1		15
Blk-cr.Night Heron							3							20		23
Am. Bittern							1				1			2		4
Canada Goose					47					1				17		65
Mallard			8	1					6					4	15	34
Black Duck							4		2		4		1	10		21
Baldpate				3					2							5
Blue-wing.Teal		5							6						12	23
Shoveller														5		5
Wood Duck		2		2	6	2	1	2	2		4					21
Ring-neck.Duck											1					1
Canvas-back															#24	-
Greater Scaup				2										2		4
Lesser Scaup	6				22				4			2				36
White-w. Scoter	1															1
Ruddy Duck		1							3							4
Hooded Mergnsr											1					1
Am. Merganser	2															2
Red-br.Merganser					1											1
Turkey Vulture	12	10	No. ?	10	17	3	11	1	5	5	11	16	26	7		134
Black Vulture	8										1	2				11
Sharp-sh. Hawk								1	1		10					12
Cooper's Hawk									2		2					4
Red-tailed Hawk		1					2		1							4
Red-shldr. Hawk		2					1		1		4					8
Broad-wg. Hawk	1	1			1				1		2	1				7
Bald Eagle					1				2		1			1		5
Marsh Hawk						1			1		1					3
Osprey		1	1			1			3	2	2	17	1	4		32
Pigeon Hawk															#28	-
Sparrow Hawk		7			1				2	1	2		3			16
Bob-white		7	1	2	1	1	4		6	1	10	4	2	14		53
King Rail												2				2
Virginia Rail														1		1
Fla. Gallinule														1		1
American Coot			2		29	1						13			#29	45
Semi. Plover																-
Killdeer	2	10	2	1	3	3	17	2	11	2	2	9	9	12		85
Amer.Woodcock							7				1					8
Wilson's Snipe		2					4		2					2		10
Upland Plover		9														9
Spotted Sandp.	1	6		1	1	2	127		3		3			50		194
Solitary Sandp.		5				2	1		1		6		1			16
Gr. Yellow-legs		1					12		2			2		4		21
Lsr.Yellow-legs		9					5							1		15
Least Sandpiper							2									2
Dowitcher							17									17
Semi. Sandp.							1									1
Marbled Godwit															#24	-
Herring Gull							2		4			6				12
Ring-bill. Gull					4		8		6			21				39
Laughing Gull									3			20				23
Common Tern															#24	-
Least Tern									3							3
Caspian Tern									5							5
Mourning Dove	8	19	10	7	3	3		2	6	4	26	1	6	6		101
Yellow-b.Cuckoo	2			1					1					1		5
Black-b. Cuckoo		1		1				1			7					10
Barn Owl															2	2
Screech Owl															#17	-

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Oth	Total
	WCo	Bkyl	MtA	Sen	Harf	LRv	Rsd	WtM	MRv	Unty	Patx	PTb	Fed	Bwtr	er	
Golden-wing W.		4	1	1				2	1		15	1				25
Blue-winged W.		3				1	2	1	1		14					22
Tenn. Warbler		3									3					6
Nashville Wblr.		2								1	4					7
Parula Warbler	6	9		3	3	3	3	17	12	10	112	64				242
Yellow Warbler	8	3				3	6	4	7		10	13				54
Magnolia Wblr.	5	14		2		1		10	1		12	1				46
Cape May Wblr.	12	9	1	21					1	1	4	1				50
Bl-thr. Blue W.	7	22		15	6	8	6	11	6		41	1				123
Myrtle Warbler	120	29	3		8	30	250	25	54	20	128	50	4	25		746
Bl-thr. Green W.	3	12		12	7	3	6	3		4	12					62
Cerulean Wblr.				2	1											3
Blackburnian W.	4	11		1				1			10					27
Yellow-thr. Wblr.												1				1
Chest-sided W.	3	36	4	6	4	4	1	3	1		26					88
Bay-breasted W.		7		1												8
Blackpoll Wblr.		5		16		1		5			38	5				70
Pine Warbler											16	6	1	2		25
Prairie Warbler	1		1	1	9	10	1	1	3		33	10	5	1		76
Palm Warbler	1	1		1					1				1			5
Oven-bird	6	9	1	1	13	4	66	7	11	2	63	4	3	1		191
No. Water-thr.		2	1				1		5		5					14
La. Water-thr.	3	2			6	2	4				2	10				29
Kentucky Wblr.		5			3	4	3				36	1				52
Yellow-throat	2	14	3	3	8	25	93	9	32	5	105	27	4			330
Yellow-br. Chat	3	7	6	6	2	10	26	1	4		24	13				102
Hooded Warbler	2	6			2	1		2	7		50	6				76
Wilson's Wblr.				2												2
Canada Warbler	4	11		6	2	2	5		2		11	2				45
Amer. Redstart	2	16	5	5	9	6	130		21	4	91	8	1	1		299
English Sparrow	30	70	40	50	20	2	36	75	110	20		38	3	50		544
Bobolink		25				3		7	7	20	11	1		5		72
E. Meadowlark	15	150	3	10	21	2	7	6			14	22	3	2		255
Red-wing	50	250	15	15	4	15	33	10	40	20	32	52	4	250		790
Orchard Oriole	2	6		3		2			2		5	10		2		32
Balto. Oriole	30	8	2	2	2		1	18	14	1	18		2			98
Rusty Blackbird							3	7	3		10					23
Purple Grackle	100	60	15	10	7	1	16		27		8		5	10		259
Cowbird	22	30	6	25	12	2		20	17	2	28	5		15		184
Scarlet Tanager	2	5	3	5	6	2	11	9	11	1	68	15	2	3		143
Summer Tanager							4					6				10
Cardinal	8	9	6	10	8	8	37	4	9	8	26	11	2	5		151
Rose-br. Grosbk.		1		7		9	17		3		5	1				43
Indigo Bunting	7	16	5	15	6	3	4	4	7	10	38	20				135
Dickcissel											1					1
Purple Finch	30	17	10	2					1		35	2				97
Pine Siskin									2		7					9
Goldfinch	50	52	20	100	12	10	17	15	46	15	166	425	6	250		1184
Red-eyed Towhee	9	14	No. 7	2	8	15	320	5	57	2	38	22	9			501
Savannah Spar.		11							8	10	2			1		32
Grasshopper Sp.	10	50	2		3	2				10	7	23				107
Henslow's Sparrow		1		3		1					2			1		8
Sharp-tailed Spar.														1		1
Vesper Sparrow		25	6			1				10	1					43
Slate-col. Junco		1	2											2		5
Chipping Sparrow	12	38	5	11	18	5	1	2	8	10	51	9	5	3		178
Field Sparrow	11	32	10	1	14	10	2	12	9	1	45	12	3	2		164
White-cr Spar.		10														10
White-thr. Spar	13	62	12	6	5	20	61	10	27	8	105	20	3	15		367
Fox Sparrow															#17	-
Lincoln's Spar.							3									3
Swamp Sparrow		3				5	53	2	6		9	11		1		90
Song Sparrow	20	16	6	3	26	10	64	4	30	15	17	9	2	25		247
Total Species	87	111	63	86	80	85	99	72	121	58	123	88	52	75		193
Total Individuals	1051	2146	371	945	604	455	2498	472	1340	324	2835	1499	219	1219		5,978



THE SEASON - January and February 1951

Chandler S. Robbins

The present period furnished a graphic example of the detrimental effects that may be suffered by half-hardy wintering birds in a season which is statistically milder than normal. Although the average temperature for both January and February was three to six degrees above normal and the precipitation twenty to forty percent deficient, severe cold snaps coupled with snowy or icy weather were of several days' duration. The effects of these conditions on wintering birdlife could not be overcome by the longer periods of unseasonable mildness which raised the average figures well above the norm. Waterfowl, which had been driven south of our state by the late December freeze, did not return in any numbers until the start of the spring migration. Shorebirds became very scarce along the coast. Phoebe decreased more noticeably than did any other species. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet was rare, as was its more hardy relative the Golden-crown - for some reason not immediately apparent. The absence of the Red-breasted Nuthatch and northern finches is undoubtedly due to a sufficiency of their normal food farther to the north.

Herons. Single Great Blue Herons wintered as far up Chesapeake Bay as Gibson Island (Mrs. W. L. Henderson) and Edgewood (Thomas A. Imhof), but due to cold weather and ice, numbers were definitely below those of recent warm winters. An American Bittern which was discovered at Strawberry Point, Baltimore County, on Jan. 28 by Duvall Jones and Howard Hancock, and seen through Feb. 11 by Edwin Willis, is the first winter record from the head of the Bay.

Waterfowl. Lt. Imhof kept close tab on the ducks wintering on the Gunpowder below Edgewood, and although the population was far from static due to ice conditions, the following estimates give a good indication of the number of wintering birds: 5,000 Baldpate, 1,000 Redheads, 3,000 Canvas-backs, 300 Ruddy Ducks; peaks of other species were recorded as follows: 42 Mallards and 50 Pintail on Feb. 25, 1,000 Black Ducks and 90 Ring-necked Ducks on Jan. 28, and 50 American Mergansers on Feb. 18. Two more drake European Widgeon were identified: one (shot) at Green Run, Assateague Is., on Jan. 2 (Robert B. Jackson), the other at Gibson Island from Feb. 27 on (Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. E. E. North.) Wood Ducks were still present at Linganore Creek, Frederick Co., on Jan. 7 (Rod Smith), and the first pair returned to Unity on Feb.

25 (Seth Low). The Jan. 20 thaw brought 1,500 Ring-necked Ducks to Gibson Is.; up to 85 were counted at Greensboro on Jan. 27 (Marvin Hewitt), and 400 at Bengies Point on Feb. 25 (Willis and Jones). American Golden-eyes and Buffle-heads were first noted courting at Gibson Is. on Feb. 13 (Mrs. Henderson).

Vultures and Hawks. A concentration of 20 Black Vultures at Shadyside, Anne Arundel Co., on Jan. 21 was unusual for that locality in mid-winter (Andrew Simon). With no previous winter records of the Osprey from Chesapeake Bay, the two individuals seen on the Chase Christmas Count and a single bird which was seen daily throughout the winter at Lloyd's Landing on the Choptank by Mrs. W. L. Henderson's brother-in-law are especially noteworthy. Douglas Hackman noted the first northward movement of hawks on Feb. 23 at White Marsh: one Red-tail and several Red-shoulders. Two Bald Eagles passed over on the 24th; and between 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the 25th Hackman counted 2 Red-tails, 8 Red-shoulders, 1 Bald Eagle, 1 Duck Hawk and one unidentified hawk, all in migration.

Shorebirds, Gulls. Spring arrival dates for Killdeer are somewhat masked by the presence of wintering birds, particularly on the Coastal Plain; the following records, however, appear to be of true migrants: Feb. 22 at Greensboro (Marvin Hewitt), Feb. 24 at Patuxent Refuge (Robert Stewart) and Middle River (Willis), and Feb. 27 at Spencerville (Low). Woodcock arrived late, the first reports being on Feb. 11 at Middle River (Willis) and Feb. 17 at Patuxent (Stewart). The Great Black-backed Gull has finally extended its wintering range up to the head of Chesapeake Bay, being reported simultaneously in Harford and Cecil Counties; Lt. Imhof found one adult in the Gunpowder River on Jan. 20, and a peak of 5 on Feb. 27; John Buckalew and Leon Cool recorded a maximum count of 5 individuals in Cecil Co. in January. The only mid-winter Laughing Gull was found at Port Tobacco on Feb. 24 by Catherine Crone and Hilda Smith.

Woodpeckers, Phoebe. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were found north to Baltimore City (Hervey Brackbill) and Idlewyde, Baltimore Co. (Mrs. Alan Beerbower); and Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered east to Annapolis (Mrs. Ford Brown) and Chase (Willis and Jones). Although an unprecedented number of Phoebes was listed on the Christmas Counts, the majority of those which attempted to winter west of the Chesapeake finally succumbed to the wintry weather of late January and February. In addition to those mentioned in the Christmas Count summary, single birds were found at Port Tobacco on Feb. 24 (Miss Crone), Ft. Washington on Dec. 31 (James O. Stevenson), Glen Echo on Feb. 22 (Frank C. Cross), Takoma Park on Jan. 20 (John E. Willoughby), Beltsville on Jan. 10 and 25 (John H. Fales), Patuxent Refuge to Feb. 3 (2 birds earlier, Stewart), McDonogh on Jan. 12 (Duncan McIntosh), and White Marsh to Feb. 19 (Hackman).

Jays, Titmice, Nuthatches, Wrens. Wintering Blue Jays broke all records of abundance at Patuxent Refuge and were also well above average numbers at other places on the Western Shore. Carolina Chickadees were also substantially above normal numbers, but White-breasted Nuthatches were scarce on the Coastal Plain, and the Red-breast was

seen only once - Feb. 7 at White Marsh (Hackman). Two Long-billed Marsh Wrens were recorded on Feb. 11 at Strawberry Pt., Baltimore Co. (Willis, Jones, Hancock). The first singing of permanent resident species was delayed by cold weather; the earliest records reported were as follows: Carolina Chickadee on Jan. 25 at Beltsville (Fales), Jan. 26 at Woodside (Fales), and Feb. 1 at Towson (Richard and Madeleine Cole); Tufted Titmouse on Jan. 18 at Beltsville (Fales) and Middle River on Feb. 1 (Willis); White-breasted Nuthatch at Middle River on Feb. 4 (Willis) and Laurel on Feb. 11 (C. S. Robbins).

Thrasher, Robin. A Brown Thrasher spent the winter at the Coles' Towson feeding station - one of the few such records west of the Coastal Plain. The vanguard of a heavy flight of Robins arrived on Feb. 12 at Denton (100, Mrs. A. J. Fletcher) and Gibson Island (8, Mrs. Henderson); and on the 13th at Baltimore and Essex (Brackbill). Hundreds were reported by all observers in the central and eastern parts of Maryland on Feb. 23-25.

Finches and Sparrows. Northern finches were virtually non-existent. The only Evening Grosbeak was seen at Laurel on Feb. 20 by DeWitt Donaldson. Pine Siskins were reported only from Middle River (maximum 2, Willis); and even the Purple Finch was notably scarce. Towhees, on the other hand, had one of their best years on record in the Coastal Plain; early singing records were obtained at Middle River on Feb. 18 (Willis) and Patuxent on Feb. 21 (Helen Webster and Low). Fifteen Savannah Sparrows turned up at Strawberry Pt. on Feb. 1 (Willis), probably driven out of fields in the nearby Piedmont by the snow. Mrs. R. S. Stauffer had an immature White-crowned Sparrow at Hagerstown on Feb. 9, and a flock wintered at the home of Melvin Partridge at Frederick. Fox Sparrows arrived late, not reaching Towson until Feb. 19 (Coles), nor becoming generally distributed until the 27th. Song Sparrows arrived on these same dates, although singing had started on Feb. 1 at Gibson Island (Mrs. Henderson), on Feb. 10 at Denton (A. May Thompson), and on Feb. 11 at Laurel and Middle River. The only Snow Buntings were a flock of 6 at Kingsville, Baltimore Co., on Jan. 10 (Simon).

FIRST WINTER RECORD OF THE BACHMAN'S SPARROW IN MARYLAND

On January 25, 1951, I picked up a sparrow which had been killed by a car along the road from Princess Anne to Deal Island in Somerset County, Maryland. The bird was one which I had not previously seen.

That evening the specimen was identified, with the aid of various reference works, as a Bachman's Sparrow (*Almophila aestivalis bachmani*). The bird was made into a skin and found to be a male in good plumage. The identification was confirmed by comparison with specimens in the Ira N. Gabrielson collection at the Patuxent Refuge.

This is not only the first recorded occurrence of the Bachman's Sparrow on the Del-Mar-Va peninsula, but is also the first winter record for the State of Maryland.

John H. Buckalew